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When Is A Bird In Iowa?

79

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The Iowa Ornithologists' Union Records Committee has reviewed several records over the past few years that have raised the question "When is a bird in Iowa?" The answer to this question turned out to be complex. We looked for authoritative guidelines on which to base decisions and decided to follow the rules of the American Birding Association in determining whether a bird sighting shall be accepted as having occurred in Iowa. The current reference to these rules is: Pyle, R. L., 1983, Report of the ABA Listing Rules Committee, *Birding* 15:171-174.

Occurrence of a bird in Iowa depends on its identification and location. Acceptance of identification is subject to the general rules of the IOU Records Committee and will not be further discussed here. A person who identifies a bird in another state and maintains direct visual contact with the bird as it flies in to Iowa may count the bird in Iowa even though it was no longer identifiable as it flew into the state.

Location of a bird is defined by ABA List Rule 1 B (ii): "A sub-area of the ABA Checklist Area, or other prescribed area, is as defined by its legal boundaries. If not legally defined otherwise, it includes adjacent waters (rivers, lakes, bays, sounds, etc.) out to half the distance to a neighboring area, but not beyond 100 miles."

The legal boundaries of Iowa are defined in Volume I of the *Code of Iowa 1983*. The northern boundary of the state is defined in the preamble to the Constitution of the State of Iowa (1857) as forty three degrees thirty minutes north latitude. The eastern boundary is defined in the same preamble as "the middle of the main channel of the Mississippi River." The southern boundary is defined as the northern boundary of the State of Missouri (June 12, 1820) as modified by the Iowa-Missouri Boundary Compromise (April 23, 1939). The compromise defines the boundary in Lee County, Iowa, as the Des Moines River "in its present course." The western boundary with South Dakota is defined in the preamble as the main channel of the Big Sioux River. The western boundary with Nebraska is defined by the Iowa-Nebraska Boundary Compromise (April 21, 1943). This compromise specifically defines the Carter Lake area (an old oxbow on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River northwest of Council Bluffs) in terms of coordinates. The rest of the Nebraska-Iowa boundary is defined as the middle of the main channel of the Missouri River which is further defined as "the center line of the proposed stabilization channel of the Missouri river as established by the United States engineers' office, Omaha, Nebraska, and shown on the alluvial plains maps of the Missouri river from Sioux City, Iowa, to Rulo, Nebraska, and identified by file number AP-1 to 4 inclusive, dated January 30, 1940, and file numbers AP-5 to 10 inclusive, dated March 29, 1940..."

Interpretation of these boundaries in relation to bird sightings offers some difficulties. The northern boundary, the southern boundary west of Lee County (the straight portion), and the Carter Lake area are easily determined. The Carter Lake area is nicely shown on United States Geological Survey maps; the boundary does not follow the middle of the oxbow--most of the water is in Nebraska. The Mississippi and Big Sioux river boundaries apparently move with the river with the boundary being the middle of the main channel. Since these river boundaries were defined before navigation channels were made, the main channel can be interpreted as half way across the body of water that comprises the primary channel of the river.

The Des Moines River boundary is defined in terms of the river's course in 1939. On the U. S. Geological Survey maps, the only part of the boundary that does not correspond with the current river channel is an area of Iowa west of Keokuk that lies south of the Des Moines River about 2 miles from its mouth.

The Missouri River boundary is even more difficult to interpret because several areas have been cut off since the boundary was defined in 1943. The boundary seems to be fixed, while the river is moving. Apparently the legal boundary has not been surveyed and is marked "indefinite boundary" on U. S. Geological Survey maps. There are several areas between Council Bluffs and Sioux City where the boundary does not correspond with the main channel of the Missouri River as listed below. Carter Lake, DeSoto Bend, and Decatur Bend are the only areas that are easily accessible.

Pottawattamie County

Carter Lake: An area northwest of Council Bluffs with boundaries specifically defined.

Harrison County

DeSoto Bend: A portion of Nebraska, within the bend of what is now called DeSoto Lake, lies on the Iowa side of the river. It is all within DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge.

Areas between Mondamin and Little Sioux: An area of Nebraska west of Mondamin is on the Iowa side of the river. North of this and west of Round Lake an area of Iowa is on the Nebraska side. Further north and northwest of Round Lake an area of Nebraska is on the Iowa side. And to the north of this and south of the Little Sioux I-80 interchange an area of Iowa is on the Nebraska side.

Monona County

Areas near Blue Lake: Southeast of Blue Lake (northwest of the town of Blenco) an area of Nebraska is on the Iowa side. Southwest of the south end of Decatur Bend an area of Iowa lies on the Nebraska side. Decatur Bend, which is south of Highway 175 and southwest of Blue Lake, is an area of Nebraska on the Iowa side. The backwater at Decatur Bend Park is the boundary. North of Highway 175 an area of Nebraska is on the Iowa side.

Woodbury County

Most southern part of the county: An area of Nebraska is on the Iowa side.

For practical purposes it would seem best to use the center of the Des Moines and Missouri rivers and the center of any oxbows created by cut-offs as the boundary for ornithological purposes. Where no oxbow exists, the U. S. Geological Survey maps could be used to give a best estimate of the boundary. These guidelines would conform to the American Birding Association "halfway across" rule to be used when the legal boundary is not explicitly defined.

In a letter to the secretary of the IOU Records Committee dated March 16, 1985, Robert L. Pyle, Chairman of the ABA Rules Committee, made two comments worthy of note. First, a bird must be entirely within a state to be counted. Thus a bird on a wire on a state boundary would have to move before its location could be determined. If a bird is in the middle of the Mississippi River, one should wait for it to clearly move closer to one shore than the other. Second, it is permissible to coax or flush a bird into another state in order to count it in that state.

Persons documenting rare birds near the Iowa border should carefully specify the location(s) of the bird and continuity of observation if the bird flies to a different state after identification. When the sighting is over a river boundary, the direct line of sight from observer to bird to the opposite shore should be used to determine whether the bird is half way across the main channel of the river. Locations should be specified as exactly as possible for birds in the Carter Lake area or within areas cut off by the Missouri River since 1943.

Iowa Big Year—1985

81

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Was 1984 a good year to do a big year in Iowa? It seems that it was!

In retrospect I had no idea that 1984 would be as good as it turned out to be. How does one decide to do an Iowa big year? For me it was the fact that I casually mentioned to Tom Kent, sometime in April of last year, that I was going to break his 1981 big year record of 277 species. From that point on it looked as though neither he nor I would forget that remark. Just to keep things interesting he did everything in his power to make 1984 miserable for me, only staying 10 to 15 species behind me most of the time, sometimes closer.

I had had some experience in doing my own personal big years in Iowa since moving back to the state in 1978. With a little friendly competition between Bob Myers and I we had become adept at big year listing. My personal totals for years prior to 1984 were fairly good and increasing every year. I certainly learned a lot about the birds of Iowa in those six years and put that knowledge to work in 1984.

My yearly totals in years prior to 1984 were as follows:

1978	190 species	When I was a novice Iowa birder
1979	237 species	Learning the ropes
1980	256 species	Gettin Good
1981	260 species	A new state record if not for Tom Kent
1982	266 species	Not good enough for a record
1983	266 species	Is this a peak? It seems hopeless

So much depends on luck in an endeavor such as this and luck was certainly with Iowa in 1984; what a year for casuals and accidentals. A total of 16 casual species and 19 accidental species (5 new for the state) were seen in Iowa during 1984 of which I saw 5 casuals and 11 accidentals.

The following is a list of those casual and accidental species and the ones seen by me in 1984:

Casuals		Accidentals	
Species	Seen by me?	Species	Seen by me?
Red-necked Grebe	Yes	Red-throated Loon	Yes
Snowy Egret	Yes	White-faced Ibis	No
Surf Scoter	No	Bean Goose	No
Ferruginous Hawk	No	European Wigeon	Yes
Prairie Falcon	No	Black Scoter	Yes
Yellow Rail	No	Barrow's Goldeneye	Yes
King Rail	No	Black-necked Stilt	Yes
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Yes	Whimbrel	No
Burrowing Owl	No	Red Knot	No
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	No	Ruff	No
Bewick's Wren	No	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Yes
Bohemian Waxwing	No	Black-legged Kittiwake	Yes
Prairie Warbler	Yes	Greater Prairie Chicken	No
Lark Bunting	No	Selasphorus sp.	Yes
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	No	Rock Wren	No
		Mountain Bluebird	Yes
		Smith's Longspur	Yes
		Great-tailed Grackle	Yes
		Western Tanager	No

Of the 276 species listed as regular in Iowa I saw 266 of them. The regulars missed by me that were seen in 1984 were: Sandhill Crane, Mute Swan, White-winged Scoter, Glaucous Gull, Snowy Owl, Carolina Wren, Varied Thrush and White-winged Crossbill. Say's Phoebe and Townsend's Solitaire were not seen during the year but are listed as regular species in the state.

Of the above birds that I missed I gave chase or at least went looking for: Sandhill Crane, White-winged Scoter, Snowy Owl, Carolina Wren and White-winged Crossbill. The Mute Swan I did not know was seen until some time after it was gone. The Varied Thrush I could have seen if I had known that I was going to do a big year; by the time I knew I was going for a big year it was gone. The Glaucous Gull was only seen by one person and I figured that I stood very little chance of seeing it if I had gone chasing after it.

The 11 casual species that I missed were not the easiest birds to connect with even with the best of luck. I did make some effort to locate Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Yellow Rail, King Rail, Bewick's Wren, Bohemian Waxwing, Lark Bunting and Sharp-tailed Sparrow. I also made an effort to locate the following accidental species, which were the ones I knew of in time to try to see them: Red Knot and Ruff. The other casuals and accidentals are more chance than anything else when they are located and do not stay long after first being sighted.

To be able to do a good big year you have to set up a rigorous itinerary to many points in the state for all the regular species and be able to chase as many of the casuals and accidentals as possible. My travels included over 11,000 miles that were driven by myself in my own vehicles during the year and does not include additional mileage driven by other birders with me as a passenger. I also made trips to all corners of the state during my quest. Good articles on setting up an itinerary for a big year are: Kent, Halmi and Shires (IBL 49:3-8), Shires and Kent (IBL 50:3-6) and Kent (IBL 52:20-24).

During the year I made forays after birds that totaled some part of 116 days (some days less than an hour, others all day) in the field. I saw at least one new species of bird for the year on 63 of those days. My cumulative totals for the end of each month was:

January	5	May	25	September	6
February	7	June	9	October	8
March	6	July	7	November	11
April	15	August	8	December	9

The many locations I visited during 1984 were usually picked because of a potential for a new species to add to my year list. Some locations were obviously visited a number of times during the year with trips to as many other locations as time would permit. Some of the locations visited were (not in any particular order):

Big Marsh	Volga Lake Rec. Area	Hawkeye Wildlife Area
Cedar Rapids	Rush Lake, Osceola Co.	Red Rock Reservoir
Little Wall Lake	LeClaire	Lacey-Keosauqua SP
Fremont & Mills Co. roads	Dubuque	White Pine Hollow
Hayden Prairie	Denver	Harpers Ferry
Waterloo/Cedar Falls	Albion	New Albin
Pine Lake	Willow Slough	Sweet Marsh
George Wyth SP	Cardinal Marsh	Riverton WA
Union Slough NWR	Nashua	Otter Creek Marsh
Coralville Reservoir	Mt. Auburn	Forney Lake
Chester	Amana Woods	Dudgeon Park
Rathbun Lake	Folsom Lake	Yellow River SF

IPL Cooling Ponds	Shimek SF
Black Hawk Park	Slip Bluff Park
Waubonsie SP	Montrose
Saylorville Dam	Big Creek Wildlife Area
Mark Sand Prairie	Lock & Dams along the Mississippi River

Other places too numerous to mention

Specialties to look for at certain localities are:

Eared Grebe — SW Iowa; Am. White Pelican — SW Iowa; Ross' Goose — SW Iowa; Greater Scaup — Mississippi or Missouri River; Oldsquaw and Scoters — Mississippi River; Red-shouldered Hawk — NE Iowa; Swainson's Hawk — SW Iowa; Golden Eagle — NE Iowa; Ruffed Grouse — NE Iowa; Wild Turkey — SE Iowa; Piping Plover — IPL Cooling Ponds, SW Iowa; Upland Sandpiper — SE or SW Iowa; Glaucous Gull — Along Mississippi at Lock and Dams; Least Tern — IPL Cooling Ponds; Long-eared, Short-eared and Saw-whet Owls — Big Creek Wildlife Area; Chuck-will's-widow — Along lower Loess Bluffs in Fremont Co.; Pileated Woodpecker — NE Iowa; Acadian Flycatcher — Shimek SF or Lacey-Keosauqua SP; Alder Flycatcher — Volga River Rec. Area; Western Kingbird — Fremont and Mills Co. near the Missouri River bottoms; Northern Shrike — Sweet Marsh or Volga Lake Rec. Area; White-eyed Vireo — Amana Woods and Shimek SF; Bell's Vireo — Willow Slough; Yellow-throated Warbler — Lacey-Keosauqua SP and Ledges SP; Worm-eating Warbler — Wildcat Den SP and Amana Woods; Louisiana Waterthrush — Waubonsie SP, White Pine Hollow, Lacey-Keosauqua SP and Shimek SF; Kentucky Warbler — Amana Woods, Lacey-Keosauqua SP and Shimek SF; Connecticut Warbler — George Wyth SP; Hooded Warbler — Amana Woods; Summer Tanager — Slip Bluff Park and Waubonsie SP; Blue Grosbeak — West of Loess Hills in SW Iowa; Clay-colored Sparrow — Volga Lake Rec. Area; Henslow's Sparrow — Hayden Prairie.

This will give you a good idea as to why I visited several of these places in order to check off these particular species.

Basically a big year in Iowa involves a lot of planning, visiting as many habitat types as possible at the right time of the year and knowing the habits and habitat type preference of as many species of birds as possible. Always be on the lookout for something different, it could be a new state record.

I hope all the above statistics were not too boring to most of you. I am in the process of doing another big year in Iowa for 1985 but I am not going all out for another record setter. It appears that 250 is not a bad number to settle on after 1984. If you are birding someplace in Iowa and look up and see me down the path do not be too surprised, Iowa is my birding domain. Good birding and I hope you set a record some time! To be able to set a new Iowa state Big Day record you will have to be higher than 282 species; that is what I ended up with on the 31st day of December 1984.

Bean Goose in The Midlands

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During the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge Christmas Bird Count, Rick Wright, Alan Grenon, Dave Starr, and Betty Grenon sighted an unprecedented Bean Goose (*Anser fabilis*) in a flying flock of seven adult White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons*) and later watched it more closely on the ground.

Although the observers are known to be highly skilled and reliable, this report was not greeted with enthusiasm. Surely an odd *Anser* would be difficult or impossible to identify. Surely the bird (if not simply an abnormal White-front) was an escape. And surely no one would see the bird again anyway. It was recorded but

dismissed immediately from mind.

Nonetheless, Nancy Curry, a refuge employee, searched for the goose and she relocated it a few days later. She alerted other birders throughout the midlands and the national birding hotline was called. Thus provoked the birding community turned its attention to this improbably sighting, came to see the bird, and began to address the questions of its identification and origin. Subsequently, the Iowa Records Committee evaluated the sighting.

This unusual bird was publicized in the *Omaha World Herald* (Anon., 1985; Thomas, 1985 a, b, c) as well as the national and Iowa birding hotlines, and DeSoto Wildlife Refuge was held open for observers. Perhaps as many as 1,600 visitors came to see the Bean Goose. Most visitors came from Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri, but others came from Maryland, Washington, New Hampshire, Colorado, Washington D.C., New York, Minnesota, Massachusetts, and, of all places, Finland. Many of the visitors were not what I would call serious birders but came to see this Siberian visitor so rare that the paper gave it front-page coverage.

The goose was last seen on the morning of January 10. It had spent much of its time resting in DeSoto Bend, an oxbow of the Missouri River. The unsurveyed Iowa-Nebraska state line runs through this oxbow. Often the bird rested on what was clearly the Iowa side of the bend, sometimes it swam in the middle, and it was also seen flying into Nebraska to feed.

The bird was a brown goose, larger than the White-fronts with it, with a longer neck and longer bill. It was a little smaller than the largest Giant Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis maxima*) with it. Eye dark. Neck brown with a rufous sheen, showing the furrows generally seen in *Anser*. Head and upper neck darker than the lower neck and body. Underside plain, grading from dark brown at the chin to pale gray breast, brownish belly, and white at the vent. There were black narrow vertical bars on the flanks and a white line continued the line of the closed wing. Upperparts gray brown with contrasting light edges to the back feathers. Light edging to the scapulars, greater coverts, and tertials. White edges of the secondaries formed parallel lines on the closed wing. Primaries dark. Underwings and area covered by the folded wing seemed dark gray blue. Tail dark with white tail coverts and white at the tip, as in the White-front. Legs bright orange. Bill distinctive: very deep at the base, very long (at least as long as the head), tapering to a narrow tip. Its profile invited comparison to swans or Canvasbacks. The bill's basal $\frac{3}{4}$ was black, then there was an orange band just before the black tip. This black tip was little more than the bill nail.

The above description was written from documentations on file with the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, written by T. Bray, S. Dinsmore, A. Grenon, T. H. Kent, F. Moore, L. & B. Padelford, W. R. Silcock, B. L. Wilson and R. Wright.

The bird was clearly a Bean Goose and the thick, long, dark bill suggests that it was a member of the eastern (Siberian) race *A. F. middendorffii*. However, identification of Bean Geese to subspecies in the field is apparently trickier than it seems in field guides. The subspecies have been defined by bill shape and bill color, but measured samples are small and both shape and color are variable within populations. As a result, there is disagreement on the limits of the named races (Ogilvie, 1978). Though naming it to subspecies may be inappropriate, the goose on the Iowa border seems to fit among the large, long-billed eastern races, not among the European forms.

More difficult than identification is the problem of the origin of this unlikely visitor to the midlands. The Bean Goose is a common goose throughout the Old World arctic regions. It nests in both the tundra and adjacent forested areas. It migrates south into Europe and Asia for the winter. Indeed, its name refers to its habit of foraging in Europe's cultivated bean fields in winter.

Since the Bean Goose nests far east in Siberia, it would take only a simple

error in navigation to bring one flying southeast into North America rather than south or southwest into its normal wintering ground. The species is considered a regular migrant in the Bering Sea (Farrand, 1983). Continental records have been few, but one was sighted in Washington from March to April 6, 1984 and was dismissed as an escape but also reported to *American Birds* (Mattocks, 1984).

Though the Bean Goose may have flown here as a result of individual error or accident, it may have been a part of the "Siberian Express", a series of weather conditions that brought an abundance of Asian species to North America in the fall and winter of 1983-1984. These included Rustic Bunting, Siberian Accentor, Stonechat, Bramblings, Siberian Ruby-throat, Whooper Swan, Smew, Slaty-backed Gull, and perhaps Washington's Bean Goose (Lehman, 1984). This goose did appear to be an adult and may first have visited the midlands on the "Siberian Express" and now returned to its familiar wintering range. There are several recent examples of birds that wintered in unusual places for a number of years in a row.

While one may delight in creating scenarios that explain the natural arrival of a Bean Goose in the Midlands, one must consider the possibility that the bird's origin was not natural at all. Could it have escaped from a captive waterfowl collection?

Many of those who saw the goose looked closely for signs of captivity. There were none. The bird had no bands, tags, or collars, no tattoos on its webs. It had all four toes on each foot and all seemed to be of normal length. The plumage appeared normal except for a few broken primaries in one wing. The hunting season ran through December 16 in areas of southwest Iowa and could easily explain this damage. The bird's behavior did not seem abnormal in any way.

Of course, all this evidence is negative, as it must be. Some birds wear clear evidence of captive origin but none wear signs declaring them to be of wild origin. Escaped captive birds usually die but if it lived a bird might lose any tags; tattoos might fade; its behavior might become normally wild.

Our attention turns to a search for a location from which a Bean Goose might escape. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Iowa Conservation Commission list no Bean Geese in these two states. Randy Rockwell, general curator at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, knows of none in the midlands. Various waterfowl collectors questioned know of none. Indeed, some do not even know what a Bean Goose is. As of 1982, the ISIS inventory of animals in zoos listed one Bean Goose, in Buffalo, New York. The San Diego Zoo made an inventory of waterfowl in private collections. It listed no Bean Geese in 1982. Neither list is complete, but clearly the Bean Goose is rare in North American collections. Todd (1979, p. 358) lists the Bean Goose as common in captivity in Europe but rare in the U.S., with the eastern races *A. F. middendorffii*, *serrifostris*, and *johanseni* especially rare in captivity anywhere.

The scarcity of captive Bean Geese is not surprising. This species may be a big, impressive goose but it too closely resembles the domestic species to be popular as an ornamental bird. One gets the impression that any collector serious enough to bother owning one would probably mark it and perhaps pinion it.

A recent article (Ryff, 1984) gives a point of comparison. The author stresses that since the Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*) is common in captivity, virtually all North American records of free-flying birds represent escapes. He compares it with the Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), considered by some an isolated race of the Bean Goose. This form is relatively rare in captivity (eight birds listed by ISIS in 1982) and there are only four North American sightings, one unanimously accepted as a wild bird, one probably an escape, and two controversial. The Bean Goose appears to be rarer in captivity than the Pink-footed Goose and sightings can not automatically be dismissed as escapes.

Evaluation of the Bean Goose record has been complicated by two sightings of

unusual free-flying geese in western Nebraska. A hunter shot a Swan or Chinese Goose (*Anser cygnoides*) at Lake Lewellen, an arm of Lake McConaughy, on December 8, 1984, and for several days Nebraska Game and Parks Commission personnel observed a pair of Bar-headed Geese (*A. indica*) at nearby Lake Ogallala in mid-February, 1985 (Cortelyou, 1985).

The Swan and Bar-headed Goose sightings have not been accepted on the newest Nebraska state list (Bray et al., manuscript). The Swan Goose has long been domesticated in China and is common in North American waterfowl collections. Its native range in Asia is south of the Bean Goose's range, making vagrancy to North America less likely. There are no accepted records of the species as a vagrant in North America or Europe. The Bar-headed Goose is also common in collections. Its native breeding range is in south-central Asia, east to Manchuria. It winters on the Indian subcontinent (Cramp and Simmons, 1977). No plausible scenario could explain the arrival of a truly wild Bar-headed Goose in Nebraska.

The occurrence of these three unusual goose species in the same winter in the same state may be coincidence, particularly as Lake McConaughy is about 300 miles west of DeSoto Bend. Some feel that all three species may have escaped or been released from one source; this would certainly discredit the possibility of a wild origin for the Bea Goose. Others, less reasonably, consider the presence of a wild Bean Goose at DeSoto Bend to be a precedent for accepting the Swan and Bar-headed Geese as wild birds. It seems best to judge each sighting on its own merits.

The Iowa Records Committee evaluated the Bean Goose sighting. Identification was not considered a problem. Initially the record was narrowly voted down, due to the possibility of captive origin, but after additional research the record was accepted (on 6-1 vote) as an addition to the Iowa state list. A major factor in accepting the record was the great rarity of the species in captivity on this continent.

This unexpected and controversial sighting will no doubt enliven birder's conversations for a long time to come.

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Field Reports

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Summer 1985

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Weather and Habitat Conditions (JPSa)

June and July 1985 reversed the second warmest spring pattern on record and, to some degree, the very hot, dry summers of the two preceding years.

The month of June averaged 3 degrees F cooler than normal. On 8 June, temperatures reached record levels (105 F at Swea City, Algona, Pocahontas, and Sioux Rapids) with 100 F or higher over almost all of the northwest half of Iowa. Five days later, Leon recorded 35 F, Elkader 37 F, and Atlantic and Chariton 38 F, with frost damage reported in some south-central localities. July was more normal in temperature, but the searing days over a long period did not occur this year. In general, July was cooler than usual, but the infamous Iowa humidity did not fail to make its presence felt.

Precipitation was only 60% of normal in June and was unequally distributed over the state. Rainfalls were usually light, but Charles City and Boone reported 3.57" and 3.20" respectively on 27 June. On 16 June, an intense hailstorm moved from Pottawattamie County into Union County, while hail piled up in drifts in Adams County. One path of the storm — over 40 miles long and up to 4 miles wide — damaged 150,000 acres of crops and property. On 23 June hail, wind, and rain inflicted damage to Adair, Madison, Warren, Clarke, and Lucas counties. These storms caused soil erosion as well, especially south of Atlantic where a short-duration rainfall of 3.75" occurred.

Dryness in June and July (and the preceding months) caused concern in the northeast, east central, central, and southwest. Not until the last few days of July did many areas of Iowa get some relief from the dry conditions with some heavy storms and some soaking rains. Eastern Iowa, for example, which had received 7"-8" below average rainfall, began to recover with rains that began to fall on the night of 24-25 July when Fayette County received 4.03".

The most obvious impact of the weather was the drying up of many ponds and streams, and lower water levels in those that remained. This undoubtedly affected some overwater nesting birds. For instance, Yellow-headed Blackbirds were missing from the Story County ponds and flooded fields they nested in last year. The dry weather undoubtedly raised nesting success for ground nesting birds although no data are available to test that. However, the early spring meant that hayfields were being cut as early as mid May with that harvesting going on through June. This would make it doubtful that birds nesting in those hayfields would be able to complete nesting before their habitat was cut out from under them. Also, the dry weather and the hard economic times seemed to encourage more mowing of ditches than in the past several years, removing a small band of habitat for many birds.

The dire mid-winter predictions that 10-15% of Iowa cropland wouldn't be planted this year largely fizzled and most agricultural fields were planted fencerow to fencerow with their usual crops.

General Trends

Spring migration was early this year but still a few migrants lingered on into June. This was especially true of shorebirds with some late spring dates almost overlapping with fall dates for some species. The concentration of shorebird habitat and more field activity may have made this more evident this year than in past years. The start of the Atlas Bird Project probably put more observers out in the field more consistently this summer than in any past year in Iowa and undoubtedly led to the large number of reports of nests including several range extensions.

Unusual Sightings

No species new to Iowa or new nesting species were added this summer. The three Casual (Snowy Egret, Burrowing Owl, Prairie Warbler) and two Accidental (Great-tailed Grackle, House Finch) species are about typical for a summer. The latter two both indicate continuation of their recent range expansions. Other unusual species reported this summer include Common Merganser, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Bonaparte's Gull, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Solitary Vireo, Blackburnian Warbler, and Clay-colored Sparrow. The start of the atlas project led to more intense field work than usual by many and there were several good finds including nesting by Ring-necked Duck, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Piping Plover, Least Tern, Common Barn-Owl, Burrowing Owl, Brown Creeper, and Worm-eating Warbler. Numerous other nesting records expanded the known nesting range of various species in Iowa. Close reading of the individual accounts will reveal what seemed to me an uncommonly large number of cases of cowbird parasitism.

SPECIES DATA (* = documented, m. ob. = many observers)

COMMON LOON: 4 were at Lost Island L., Palo Alto Co. on 12 Jul (FAH) and 2 summered at Clear L. (TGL).

PIED-BILLED GREBE: 18 nests were found at Big Wall L. in June (SD, JJD) and 2 young were seen near New Albin on 9 Jun (MPr, BPr).

EARED GREBE: 1 at Eagle L., Emmet Co. (SD) and 2 at the IPL Ponds on 18 Jun (BLW) were the only reports.

WESTERN GREBE: None were reported from Rush L. where they nested last year.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN: There were numerous reports including 300 summering in the Spirit L. area (DCH), 100 summering at Mud L., Clay Co. (JJD), 1 summering at Saylorville Res. (SD), 65 at High L., Emmet Co. on 25 Jul. (HZ), and 5-32 at Forney L. through Jul. (m. ob.).

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT: 1-4 were at Hendrickson M. (MPr, BPr, SD, HZ) and Saylorville Res. (SD) throughout summer and 1 was at Willow Sl. 12 and 19 Jun. (BLW).

AMERICAN BITTERN: 2 at Big Wall L. on 8 Jun. (SD), 2 at Eagle L., Emmet Co. on 15 Jun. (SD), and 1 near Dinsdale, Tama Co. on 15 Jun. (FLM) were the only reports.

LEAST BITTERN: 2 nests were found in Dickinson Co. (Kay Neumann fide JJD). Singles near New Albin on 9 Jun. (DK) and at Ames on 28 Jun. (PM) were out of the usual range; 6 at Big Wall L. in Jun. (SD) and 4 at Union sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD) were more typical.

GREAT BLUE HERON: The colony at Saylorville did poorly this summer (BE). Post-breeding concentrations had reached 144 at Coralville Res. on 28 Jul. (THK) and 100+ at both Forney L. (m. ob.) and Brenton Sl., Polk Co. (RKM) by mid Jul.

GREAT EGRET: Numerous reports with ca. 15 at Forney L. in mid Jul. (m. ob.) the most.

SNOWY EGRET: 1 or 2 were at Forney L. 13-29 Jul. (TB, *RCe, SD, JF, FLM, RKM, MPr, BPr).

LITTLE BLUE HERON: Up to 15 (10 imm., 5 ad.) were at Forney L. from 14-29 Jul. (TB, SD, JF, FLM, RKM, BPr, MPr); 6 were at Willow Sl. on 18 Jul. (BLW) and singles were at Lakin Sl., Guthrie Co. on 20 Jul. (BPr, MPr) and Walker Sl., Wright Co. on 29 Jul. (SD).

CATTLE EGRET: 1 at Folsom L. (where they nested in 1984) on 10 Jun. (RKM), 2 on 9 Jul. (TB, BPa) and 6 on 20 Jul. (JF) at Forney L. and 3 (2 adults, 1 young) in Appanoose Co. on 23 Jun. (RC, TNJ) were the only reports.

GREEN-BACKED HERON: There were 8 nests at L. Manawa (Dan DeLong fide BLW) and nests and young near Oakville (PCP).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON: Besides those nesting at Jemmerson Sl. (George Brown fide JJD), the only reports were 1 at Big Wall L. on 8 Jun. (SD), 1-5 at Forney L. from 15-29 Jul. (m. ob.), and several that summered near Booneville (ElA, EuA).

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON: 6-9 were at Forney L. from 14-29 Jul. (m. ob.).

TUNDRA SWAN: 1 lingered into June at Union Sl. NWR and then died (JPF).

MUTE SWAN: 1 at Hills, Johnson Co. on 15 Jan. (m. ob.) was left out of the winter report.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: 1 summered at Willow Sl. (BLW); singles at Forney L. 13-26 Jul. (m. ob.), Eagle L., Hancock Co. on 16 Jun. (SD), and Saylorville Res. 11-13 Jun. (SD) probably were summering.

SNOW-GOOSE: 6 summered at Willow Sl. (BLW) and 5 were at Forney L. on 20 Jul. (JF).

WOOD DUCK: Nesting was very successful at Union Sl. NWR (JPF).

GREEN-WINGED TEAL: The only reports were singles at Forney L. on 3 Jun. and 14 Jul. (SD) and Morse L., Wright Co. on 30 Jun. (SD), 1-2 at Hendrickson M. on 13-20 Jun. (SD, PM, HZ), 2 at Bays Branch WMA, Guthrie Co. on 26 and 28 Jul. (SD), and 8 at Union Sl. NWR on 15 Jun. (SD).

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK: 2 were at Hendrickson M. on 20 Jun. (SD).

NORTHERN PINTAIL: Broods were at Union Sl. NWR in Jun. (SD, JPF) and nests at McIntosh Sl. and Ventura M. (TGL); 1 male was at Hendrickson M. from 9-24 Jun. (SD, PM).

NORTHERN SHOVELER: Broods were at Union Sl. NWR (JPF) and near Lake Park (SD) in Jun. and nests at McIntosh Sl. (TGL); other reports were 4 at Forney L. on 3 Jun. (SD) and 1 at Big Wall L. on 8 Jun. (SD).

GADWALL: 1-5 were at Forney L., Big Wall L., McCord Pond, Guthrie Co., Bays Branch WMA, and Forney L. (SD, et al.); 9 were at Union Sl. NWR on 15 Jun. (SD).

AMERICAN WIGEON: A pair at L & D 9 on 15 Jun. (DK) and 1 at Cardinal M. on 21 Jul. (DK) were unexpected; 1-2 at Forney L. (MPr, SD), Union Sl. NWR (JPF, SD) and Eagle L., Hancock Co. (SD) were more typical.

REDHEAD: 1 at Colo 12-14 Jun. was far out of range (HZ).

RING-NECKED DUCK: A brood at S. Twin L., Calhoun Co., on 22 Jun. (SD) was unexpected; singles summering on a farm pond in NW Polk Co. (SD, BE), at Davenport (PCP), at Cardinal M. on 24 Jun. (DK), at Forney L. on 13-14 July (m. ob.), and at Big Wall L. throughout Jun. (SD) were more typical.

LESSER SCAUP: 1-4 were found in Cerro Gordo, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Fremont, Guthrie, Kossuth, Lee, Mills, Polk, Pottawattamie, Scott, and Wright counties.

HOODED MERGANSER: Broods were seen in Allamakee Co. (DK), Scott Co. (PCP, MLP), at Big Sand Mound Pres. (PCP), at Union Sl. NWR (JPF), and at Swan L., Johnson Co. (CJB, THK); singles were found in Calhoun, Story, and Wright counties.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER: 1 was at Elm L., Wright Co. on 30 Jun. (SD).

COMMON MERGANSER: 1 on the Mississippi R. at Montrose, Lee Co. on 10 Jun. (RCe) is one of the few Iowa summer records.

RUDDY DUCK: A brood was at Union Sl. NWR (JPF).

TURKEY VULTURE: Up to 30 were concentrated near a roost in Mills Co. in Jul. (BLW).

OSPREY: 1 at Hendrickson M. on 12 Jun. (PM, SD, BPr, MPr) was the only report.

BALD EAGLE: An adult at L & D 9 on 15 Jun. (DK) and another at Plano, Appanoose Co. until 29 Jun. (TNJ), and an immature at Forney L. on 20 Jul. (JF) were the only reports.

NORTHERN HARRIER: A nest was found at Union Sl. NWR (JPF); singles were in Fremont (MPr, BPr), Polk (SD), and Wayne (RCe) counties during Jul.

COOPER'S HAWK: A nest with 2 young in Yellow River F. on 14 Jun. and another at Saylorville (BE), DK) are 2 of the few recent nesting records. Other reports were singles in Hardin Co. on 2 Jun. (DK), at Ft. Madison on 12 Jun. (RCe), in Shimek F. on 16 Jun. (RCe), in Allamakee Co. on 14 Jun. (DK), and a pair at New Albin on 28 Jun. (DK).

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK: Adults were at their usual Allamakee Co. locations in Jun. (DK).

BROAD-WINGED HAWK: Pairs were seen near Fraser, Boone Co. and at Ledges S.P. throughout the period (SD, MD), 2 summered at Yellow River F. (DK), 1 was at Pine L. S.P., Hardin Co. on 1 Jun. (MPr), 1 was in Scott Co. on 6 Jun. (PCP), and 1 was in Linn County on 13 Jul. (PW).

SWAINSON'S HAWK: Singles were in Franklin Co. on 20 Jun. (MPr) and Lyon Co. on 24 Jun. (Joel McMillin fide JJD).

RED-TAILED HAWK: One seen near Akron, Plymouth Co. on 1 Jun. appeared to be the light-colored "Kriders" subspecies (Larry Stone fide JJD).

AMERICAN KESTREL: Nest boxes placed along Interstate 35 in central and north-central Iowa produced about 70 young (Doug Reeves fide JJD). VanDyk thought they were very common in Sioux Co.

PEREGRINE FALCON: 1 reported W of Ames on 5 Jun. (*MD) will be reviewed by the Records Committee.

CHUKAR: 2 seen in Davenport on 12 Jun. (John Channon fide PCP) are the first report from that population in several years.

GRAY PARTRIDGE: A brood was found near Hendrickson M. on 15 Jul (SD); other reports from the edge of this species range included 1 near Dinsdale, Tama Co. on 15 Jun. (FLM) and 2 at Calmar, Allamakee Co. on 17 Jun. (DK).

WILD TURKEY: Broods were found in Shimek F. (RCe, JF), Ledges S.P. on 8 Jun. (MD), and Volga River S.P. (JF).

NORTHERN BOBWHITE: Both Wilson and Bray noted bobwhite were doing well in SW Iowa and VanDyk heard several in W. Sioux Co. The only other report was 2 at Volga River S.P., Fayette Co. on 7 Jun. (JF, FLM).

COMMON MOORHEN: 1-3 were at Union Sl. NWR (JPF), New Albin on 9 Jun. (MPr, BPr), Spirit L. in Jun. (LaVonne Foote fide DCH), South Twin L. on 13 Jun. (JJD), Mud L. on 16 Jun. (SD, GBr), and Elm L., Wright Co. on 30 Jun. (SD). 6 plus a nest were found at Big Wall L. on 23 Jun. (JJD, SD) and broods were at Spring Run WMA, Dickinson Co. on 23 Jul. (HZ) and Ventura M. on 29 Jul. (SD).

AMERICAN COOT: A brood was found S of New Albin on 9 Jun. (MPr, BPr) and 9 nests were at Big Wall L. in Jun. (SD, EM).

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER: Singles at Saylorville Res. on 10 Jun. (SD) and Hendrickson M. on 19 Jun. (PM) are the latest spring (or earliest fall) dates on record.

LESSER GOLDEN-PLOVER: 3 at Saylorville Res. on 10 Jun. (SD), 2 at Goose L., Clinton Co. on 12 Jun. (CJB), 14 at Union Sl. NWR on 15 Jun. (SD, GBr), 1 at Hendrickson M. on 20 Jun. (SD), and 1 at Big Wall L. on 23 Jun. (SD) are late and suggest summering birds; 1 at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr) is the earliest fall arrival.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER: 4 at Union Sl. NWR (SD, GBr) and 1 at Hendrickson M. (HZ) on 15 Jun. are the latest spring records. The earliest fall report was 1 at Forney L. on 6 Jul. (TB).

PIPING PLOVER: Most reports were from the IPL Ponds where 6 pairs nested (BLW, m. ob.); they also nested near Sioux City (BLW). I was at L. Manawa on 19 Jul. (TB).

KILLDEER: 285 at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr) is the largest concentration reported in Iowa.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS: 1 at Big Marsh, Butler Co. on 2 Jun. (DK) is the latest spring date; 1 at Union Sl. NWR on 15 Jun. (SD, GBr) suggests summering; 1 at Bays Branch WMA on 4 Jul. (SD) and 3 at Cone M. on 5 Jul. (SD) are the second and third earliest fall dates. 80 were at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr).

LESSER YELLOWLEGS: 1-5 at Hendrickson M. from 9-22 Jun. (SD, PM, HZ) suggests summering birds but 18 there on 23 Jun. (HZ) probably were southbound. 8 at Union Sl. NWR on 15 Jun. (SD, GBr) and 6 at Big Wall L. on 23 Jun. defy classification while 1 in Iowa Co. on 3 Jul. (CJB) apparently was southbound. 217 were at Bays Branch WMA on 14 Jul (SD) and an amazing 1,450 were at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr). A late bird at Tabor, Fremont Co. died on 29 Oct 1984, skin to Univ. Nebr., Omaha (BLW).

SOLITARY SANDPIPER: 1 at New Albin on 28 Jun. (DK) is the third earliest date; numerous others were reported in the next week including 31 at Cone M. on 5 Jul. (SD).

WILLET: Most reports were from SW Iowa: singles at IPL Ponds on 27 Jun. (third earliest, BLW), Forney L. on 14 Jul. (SD) and 4 at Willow Sl. on 18 Jul. (BLW). 4 flew over Colo on 25 Jul. (HZ).

UPLAND SANDPIPER: 27 reports came from all over the state (Appanoose, Black Hawk, Cherokee, Clinton, Dallas, Decatur, Dickinson, Fremont, Greene, Hancock, Jasper, Kossuth, Pocahontas, Pottawattamie, Story, and Wright counties; a brood was seen at Eagle L., Hancock Co. (SD, GBr). Gillaspey said they were abundant in Decatur Co.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT: 1 at Hendrickson M. on 4 Jun. (HZ) ties the record late date.

MARBLED GODWIT: 1 at Hendrickson M. on 23 Jun. (HZ, with details) is the first recent summer record of this former nesting species.

RUDDY TURNSTONE: 4 at Brenton Sl., Polk Co. on 26 Jul. (RKM) is the first summer record.

SANDERLING: 3 at Hendrickson M. on 5 Jun. (PM) are the latest on record and 3 at Cherokee on 25-27 Jul. (DBi, MMB) are the earliest fall dates.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER: 275 at Hendrickson M. on 5 Jun. dwindled to 1 on 20 Jun. (HZ, SD, PM). 3-36 at Saylorville Res. from 11-17 Jun. (SD) showed a similar pattern and 2 at Big Wall L. on 23 Jun. (SD) were a record late date. Southbound (?) birds arrived at Hendrickson M. on 3 Jul. (PM) and later there were 400 at Bays Branch on 28 Jul. (SD) and 550 at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr).

WESTERN SANDPIPER: Details were provided for 1 at Amana Ll. on 9 Jul. (CJB), 2-5 at Forney L. on 13-14 Jul. (FLM, SD), 1 at Big Creek, Polk Co. on 17 Jul. (SD), 5 at Bays Branch WMA on 26 Jul. (SD), and 1 at Brenton Sl. on 26 Jul. (RKM). The first 3 are the earliest dates on record.

LEAST SANDPIPER: 2-3 at Hendrickson M. on 9 Jun. (PM, SD, MPr) are the latest and 5 at Riverton on 3 Jun. (SD, MPr) tie the second latest spring dates. The earliest fall birds were 6 at Hendrickson M. on 3 Jul. (PM). 175 were at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER: 1-16 at Hendrickson M. from 5-19 June. (PM, SD, BPr, MPr, HZ), 1 at Colo on 19 and 25 Jun. (HZ), 1-8 at Saylorville Res. from 10-13 Jun. (SD), and 40 at Union Sl. NWR on 15 Jun. (SD, GBr) probably were late spring birds. 2 at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr) is the earliest fall record (or did they summer?).

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER: Singles at Hendrickson M. on 9 Jun. (PM, SD) and Big Creek S.P. on 11 Jun. (SD) are record late spring dates. 1 at Saylorville Res on 11 Jul. (SD) and 12 at Bays Branch WMA (SD) and 1 at Forney L. (FLM) on 14 Jul. are record early fall dates.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER: 1-2 at Hendrickson M. from 5-20 Jun. (PM, SD, HZ), 2 at Union Sl. NWR on 15 Jun. (SD, GBr), and 2 at Saylorville Res. on 11 Jun. (SD) were record late spring birds or summering. 1 at Coralville Res (THK) and 4 at Bays Branch (SD) on 4 Jul. tie the second earliest fall date. 925 were at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr).

DUNLIN: Singles at Hendrickson M. on 9 Jun. (SD) and Union Sl. NWR on 15 Jun. (SD) are record late spring dates.

STILT SANDPIPER: 1 at Colo on 27 Jun. (HZ) and 2 at Bays Branch WMA on 4 Jul. (SD) are the earliest and third earliest fall records. 12 at Amana L. on 9 Jul. (CJB) were also early. 135 were at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr).

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER: 1 at Saylorville Res. on 13 Jun. was late (SD, GBr). Fall birds included 4 at Bays Branch on 4 Jul. (SD), 1 at Hendrickson M. on 7 Jul. (PM), 5 at Colo on 11 Jul. (HZ), 5-16 at Forney L. on 14 Jul. (FLM, WRS, SD), and 95 at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr).

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER: 1 at Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr) was compared with short-bills in the field.

COMMON SNIPE: Singles were at Morse L., Wright Co. on 30 Jun. (SD) and Union Sl. NWR on 29 Jul. (SD, GBr).

WILSON'S PHALAROPE: 2 females at Hendrickson M. on 19 Jun. (PM, HZ) are late as was 1 at Goose L., Clinton Co. on 12 Jun. (CJB). 2 in Iowa Co. on 3 Jul. (CJB), 5 at Colo on 6 Jul. (HZ), and 1 at Forney L. on 13-14 Jul. (RCe, FLM, SD) were early for fall birds. 2 at Colo Ponds on 3 Jul 1984 (HZ) was left out of last year's report.

FRANKLIN'S GULL: There were numerous reports of 1-12 birds in SW Iowa and 7 summered at Saylorville Res. (SD).

BONAPARTE'S GULL: 3 immatures in Appanoose Co. on 8 Jun. (RC) is the first summer record in over 25 years.

RING-BILLED GULL: The 6 yearling birds summering at IPL Ponds were joined by 4 adults and 2 young-of-the-year birds on 19 Jul. (BLW). 30 summered at Pool 19 (RCe), 110 were near Arnold's Park on 24 Jul. (HZ), and 78 were at Ingham L., Emmet Co. on 25 Jul. (HZ).

CASPIAN TERN: 1-5 summered at IPL Ponds (BLW) and 6 summered at Saylorville Res. (SD). There were several other scattered reports.

FORSTER'S TERN: Nesting was reported at Elm L. and Big Wall L., Wright Co. (SD, JJD) and at Jemmerson Sl. (George Brown fide JJD). 16 at Trumbull L. on 16 Jun. (SD) suggests nearby nesting. Several summered at Saylorville Res. (SD) and there were numerous other scattered reports. 20 at Zirbel Sl. on 19 Jul (SD) probably were migrants.

LEAST TERN: Most reports were from IPL Ponds where 9 pairs nested (BLW). 2 were in Plymouth Co. on 6 Jul. (TB, WRS) and 2 were at L. Manawa on 19 and 29 Jul. (TB, BPa).

BLACK TERN: Nesting was reported from Union Sl. NWR (JPF), Jemmerson Sl. (HZ), and Big Wall L. (20 nests; SD, JJD). 113 on the Mississippi R. at Montrose on 25 Jul (RCe) were migrants.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO: 1-3 were reported from throughout Iowa.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO: Koenig commented "very few" in NE Iowa.

COMMON BARN-OWL: Nests were found in Wayne and Clarke counties (Doug Reeves fide JJD).

BURROWING OWL: A nest with 4 young near Aurelia, Cherokee Co. (*DBI, photo) was one of the few recent nest records for Iowa.

CHUCK-WILL's-WIDOW: Up to 6 were reported by many at the usual place N of Waubonsie S.P., 1 was near Eddyville, Wapello Co. (JF), and 1 was in Mahaska Co. in late Jul (SPSA).

WHIP-POOR-WILL: Several along the Little Sioux R., Cherokee Co. (DBI, MMB) and 6 at Stone S.P., Woodbury Co. on 6 Jul. (TB) were somewhat out-of-range. 34 were heard in Shimek F. on 22 Jun. (PW).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD: Most reports were from NE Iowa including 8 in Clayton Co. on 24 Jul. (SD) and 13 in Allamakee Co. (DK).

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: Most reports were from the riverbottoms in NE Iowa where Koenig saw 43 during the period including nests in Allamakee Co. on 15 Jun. and at Highlandville, Winneshiek Co. on 24 Jun. Others were 2 along the Big Sioux R. in Lyon Co. on 18 Jul. (DCH) and 1 at Volga River S.P. on 7 Jul. (FLM).

PILEATED WOODPECKER: Singles were reported from 5 sites in eastern Iowa.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER: The latest was 1 on 5 Jun in Mills Co. (BLW).

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER: 1 at Laurens on 12 Jun. (RVH) is the latest spring record.

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER: Reported from throughout E Iowa. A nest at Cold Springs Park, Cass Co. on 1 Jun. (BLW) was W of the usual range as was 1 at Big Wall L. on 8 Jun. (SD, EM). Koenig's county totals for the period included 30 in Allamakee and 12 in Dubuque.

ALDER FLYCATCHER: Early Jun. reports from Hardin, Linn, Marshall, and Story counties included 2 in Linn Co. on 10 Jun. (PW).

WILLOW FLYCATCHER: Reported from all regions; nests were found at Big Wall L. and Doolittle Prairie, Story Co. (SD, JJD).

LEAST FLYCATCHER: Koenig had singles at Marquette on 16 Jun., White Pine Hollow on 22 Jun., Jasper Co. on 13 Jul., and Montezuma on 14 Jul., and 2 at Highlandville on 22 Jun.

WESTERN KINGBIRD: Far more reports this year than in 1984; 1-11 were seen by many in Fremont Co. Others were 1 in Hardin Co. on 1 Jun. (*MPr, ELA, EuA) and 1 at the IPL Ponds on 13 Jul. (MPr, BPr).

PURPLE MARTIN: Mosman reported nesting success about the same as last year with about 260 fledged at Elkhart. A roost at Keokuk had grown to 4,500 birds by 28 Jul. (RCe, Zelma Williams).

CLIFF SWALLOW: Mosman noted a colony on an interstate overpass near Des Moines. Postbreeding flocks numbered 800 at Bays Branch and 1,000 at Dunbar Sl., Greene Co. on 26 Jul. (SD).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: Singles were at Sioux Center from 30 Jun. -25 Jul. (JV), in Davenport on 7 Jul. (PCP), and at Grinnell on 15 Jul. (DK).

BROWN CREEPER: A nest found on Huron Island, Des Moines Co. on 28 May (PCP) is one of the few for Iowa. Koenig saw 1-2 creepers near New Albin on 28-29 Jun.

CAROLINA WREN: 1 seen by many in Jul. at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P., 1 in Des Moines (ELA, EuA), and another in Allamakee Co. (DK) were the only reports. Clearly it hasn't recovered from its recent decline.

BEWICK'S WREN: No reports.

WINTER WREN: No reports.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD: Nest success at bluebird routes was poor in Cherokee Co. (MMB), fair in Mills Co. (BLW), and "best in 15 years" in Polk Co. (DDM).

VEERY: 1-3 were reported from sites throughout the eastern half of Iowa; 12 at White Pine Hollow on 22 Jun. (DK) and 12 males in Ledges S.P. (MD) were the maximum counts.

WOOD THRUSH: A female was feeding cowbird young at Ledges S.P. on 22 Jun. (MD).

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD: All reports except 1 in Scott Co. on 25 Jun. (PCP) were from the southern row of counties: singles at 2 places in Davis Co. on 12 Jul. (RCe, FLM), 2 W of Lacey-Keosauqua A.P. on 6 Jul. (SD), up to 4 in Appanoose Co. (RC, TNJ), and 2-3 near Sidney, Fremont Co. on 20-21 Jul. (MPr, BPr, WRS, JF).

CEDAR WAXWING: This seemed to be the year of the Cedar Waxwing as I saw or heard birds everywhere I went and others also reported flocks. Nests were found near Madrid (Brenda Voas fide JJD), at Doolittle Prairie, Story Co. (JJD), at Big Creek (SD), at Volga River S.P. (FLM), and at Lake Anita S.P., Cass Co. (Tim Schrantz fide BLW).

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE: Adults with 2 young were found in NW Lyon Co. on 13 Jun. (DCH); 1-3 were found in Bremer, Marshall, Poweshiek, and Story counties.

WHITE-EYED VIREO: Most reports were from SE Iowa where up to 8 were seen in Lee and Van Buren Counties (RCe, et al.). 3 pairs and an adult feeding a young cowbird were found in Yellow River F. on 22 Jun. (DK). Singles at Fountain Springs P., Delaware Co. on 10 Jun. (MPr, BPr), Volga River S.P. on 13 Jun. (JF), and near Woodward, Dallas Co. on 14 Jul. (RKM) were more unusual.

BELL'S VIREO: Widely reported in southern Iowa with reports from Cedar, Dallas, Fremont, Guthrie, Jasper, Johnson, Mahaska, Mills, Polk, Poweshiek, Story, Van Buren, and Winneshiek counties.

SOLITARY VIREO: 1 seen well at Waubonsie S.P. on 13 Jul. (*RCe, FLM) is the first Iowa summer record.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO: A female was feeding a young cowbird at Ledges S.P. on 21 Jun (MD).

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER: Reported from Allamakee (15, DK), Appanoose, Boone, Hardin, Iowa, Lee, Linn, VanBuren, and Winneshiek counties.

NORTHERN PARULA: 1-3 were reported at Waubonsie S.P. (MPr, SD), Ledges S.P. (SD, MD), Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. (MPr, BPr, JF, CJB) and 7 + were found at 4 Lee County sites (RCe).

YELLOW WARBLER: 38 were near Marquette on 16 Jun (DK) and a nest was at Doolittle Prairie, Story Co. (JJ). They were scarce in Linn Co. (PW).

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER: A male in Davenport on 5 Jun. (Harold Ray fide PCP) ties the second latest spring date; another adult male at LeClaire on 6 Jul. (Don Moeller fide PCP) was summering or a very early fall migrant.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: 1-3 were at the usual Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. (MPr, BPr, JF, CJB) and Ledges S.P. (MD, SD) sites.

PRAIRIE WARBLER: 1 or possibly 2 were seen in Shimek F. near Argyle from 4-26 Jul. (*RCe, *JF, *FLM, *MPr, *BPr SP).

CERULEAN WARBLER: Reported from the usual places in eastern Iowa including a female feeding a young cowbird in Shimek F. on 29 Jun (RCe). Koenig found 22 in Allamakee Co. and 8-9 males were in Ledges S.P. (SD, MD).

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER: 1-2 seen from 16 Jun.-2 Jul. in Shimek F. (RCe) and a female at Waubonsie S.P. on 14 Jul. (MPr, BPr) are suggestive of

nesting.

AMERICAN REDSTART: Widely reported including a female with 3 young near Larrabee, Cherokee Co. on 20 Jun. (MMB). Peaks included 34 at Marquette on 16 Jun. (DK), 25 at Effigy Mounds on 29 Jun. (DK), and 25 in Ledges S.P. (MO).

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER: Besides several reports from the Mississippi R. Bottoms, 1 was at Dudgeon Area, Benton Co. on 10 Jun. (MPr, BPr) and 2 pairs were at Saylorville Res. (BE)

WORM-EATING WARBLER: Up to 11 were in Shimek F. near Argyle from 20 June. -16 Jul. (RCe) FLM, JPS) with evidence of nesting. (See General Note) Singles were at Pikes Peak S.P. on 15 Jun (DK) and Ledges S.P. on 1 July. (SD).

OVENBIRD: Koenig's counts of 48 in Yellow River F. on 14 Jun., 45 at Shimek F. on 9 Jun., and 31 at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 8 Jun. are up about 50% over comparable counts last year.

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH: Small numbers were reported in the usual locations in eastern and southern Iowa. The 5-7 pairs at Ledges S.P. included 1 with 4 fledglings (MD).

KENTUCKY WARBLER: Numerous reports, especially in Lee (16, DK) and Van Buren (16, DK) counties. Koenig saw 15 in Allamakee Co., and 1-4 in Clayton, Dubuque, Hardin, and Poweshiek counties. 3-4 males at Ledges S.P. in Jun. (SD, MD) were beyond its usual range.

MOURNING WARBLER: Singles at Liscomb, Marshall Co. on 11 Jun. (BPr, MPr) and Marquette on 16 Jun. (DK) were late.

HOODED WARBLER: 2 at Yellow River F. in Jun. (DK), 1 at Ledges S.P. on 22 Jun. (MD), 1 at Amana Woods on 29 Jun. (PW) and 9 Jul. (CJB), and 1 in Linn Co. in Jun. (John Broz fide PW) were the only reports.

CANADA WARBLER: Koenig had the usual bird at White Pine Hollow on 22 Jun.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT: Most reports were from SE Iowa: 1-4 at Shimek F. 7 Jun. -13 Jul. (RCe, JF, FLM, MPr, BPr) and 1 at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 8 Jun. (MPr, BPr). Koenig also had singles in Jasper and Winneshiek and 3 in Mahaska counties.

SUMMER TANAGER: 1-4 were seen by many at Waubonsie S.P.; 1 also was at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 20 Jun. (CJB) and a pair nested at Winterset (ELA, EuA).

SCARLET TANAGER: Small numbers were reported from Allamakee, Boone, Cherokee, Delaware, Fremont, Iowa, Lee, Polk, Van Buren, and Woodbury counties.

BLUE GROSBEAK: Most reports were from the usual Fremont Co. locations. Others included a nest near Modale, Harrison Co. on 20 Jun. (BLW), up to 7 in Cherokee Co. including a nest with 4 young on 26 Jul. (MMB, DBi), a nest in Sioux Co. on 20 Jul. (JV), and a male in SE Iowa at Shimek F. on 7 Jun. (*MPr) where 1 was seen last year.

DICKCISSEL: VanDyk said they were abundant in Sioux Co., no one else commented.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: 1 male was singing at Volga River S.P. on 7 Jul. (*FLM, JF).

VESPER SPARROW: Dixon noted that cowbird parasitism, rains, and field cultivation greatly reduced nesting success in central Iowa.

LARK SPARROW: 12 near Eddyville, Wapello Co. on 10 Jul. (JF) and 10 at Big Sand Mound Pres. on 1 Jun. (PCP) were the most reported. A pair with 2 young were at Saylorville Res. on 7 Jun. (BE).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW: None reported.

SWAMP SPARROW: A female carrying food on 15 Jun. at Union Sl. NWR (SD, GBr) suggested nesting.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE: 1-4 were reported at Forney L. from 13-22 Jul. (*SD, *RKM, JF, MPr, BPr).

ORCHARD ORIOLE: There were reports from all areas except NW Iowa; a nest with 2 young was near Colo on 20 Jun. (SD).

PINE SISKIN: 7 were present at Cherokee until 24 Jun. (MMB), 1 was at Iowa City until 28 Jun. (JF), several were in Sioux Center in early Jun. (JV), and 1-4 lingered at Davenport until 7 Jul. (Gary Inhelder fide PCP).

HOUSE FINCH: A male reported in Ames on 8 Jul. (*PM) awaits evaluation by the Records Committee.

CONTRIBUTORS

Eloise and Eugene Armstrong, Booneville; Carl J. Bendorf, Iowa City; Dick Bierman, Cherokee; Tanya Bray, Omaha, NE; Marion B. Brewer, Cherokee; Robert Cecil, Keokuk; Virginia and Ed Crocker, Storm Lake; Ray Cummins, Centerville; James J. Dinsmore, Ames; Steve Dinsmore, Ames; Mark Dixon, Ames; Bery Engebretsen, Johnston; Joe P. Fleskes, Ames; Jim Fuller, Iowa City; J. Donald Gillaspey, Lamoni; Ron V. Harms, Laurens; Douglas C. Harr, Larchwood; Fred A. Heinz, Ruthven; Thomas N. Johnson, Centerville; Thomas H. Kent, Iowa City; Darwin Koenig, Montezuma; Ted G. LaGrange, Clear Lake; Paul Martsching, Ames; Francis L. Moore, Waterloo; D. D. Mosman, Elkhart; Robert K. Myers, Perry; Peter C. Petersen, Davenport; Beth Proescholdt, Liscomb; Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb; James P. Sandrock, Iowa City; John VanDyk, Sioux Center; Peter Wickham, Cedar Rapids; Barbara L. Wilson, Hastings; Hank Zaletel, Colo.

OTHER OBSERVERS

Gordon Brown (SD), Dan DeLong (BLW), LaVonne Foote (DCH), Phyllis Harris (MPr), Erik Munson (SD), Babs Padelford (TB), Mary Lou Petersen (PCP), Andy Saunders (BLW), Tim Schrantz (BLW), W. Ross Silcock (BLW), Dennis Thompson (MPr).

COMMENT

I appreciate the prompt receipt of so many good field reports. Last year, 16 species of warblers were reported. This year, Chestnut-sided was missed but Prairie and Hooded Warblers were added raising the list to 17. The evidence of Worm-eating Warblers nesting in SE Iowa fulfilled a challenge I raised last year. Several other species require similar documentation. As an addendum to the spring report, Bruce Peterjohn notes that he has never seen a Semipalmated Sandpiper in Ohio before May and suggests that the Iowa March sightings reported in the last issue are likely winter-plumaged Least Sandpipers in a lighter plumage than we are used to seeing. Send fall season reports (1 Aug.-30 Nov.) by 1 Dec. to T.H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, Ia 52240.

General Notes

Possible Iowa Nesting of Worm-eating Warbler — At approximately 7:15 on 20 June 1985 in the Croton Unit of Shimek Forest, Lee County, I observed two adult Worm-eating Warblers (*Helmitheros vermivorus*) engaged in apparent nest-building and breeding activities. I first saw one of the birds carrying what appeared to be a small moth which it gave to a brown juvenile bird that was slightly larger than the adult warbler. The young bird sat almost motionless in the tree, but frequently made "begging" sounds typical of a Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). The juvenile cowbird was identified by its gray-brown plumage, faint streaking on the breast, dark legs, and size. During the entire period of observation, the adult warblers were active and gave repeated chip notes.

A few minutes later and some 300 yards from the above sighting, another pair of Worm-eating Warblers were seen actively foraging near the ground. One of the birds carried a small caterpillar to a juvenile Worm-eating Warbler which was uniformly brown, with slightly lighter underparts. I observed no crown stripes, but did observe a faint dusky eye streak, an indistinct malar streak, and pink legs. The juvenile was approximately the size of the adult bird and flitted about fairly actively, more so when the parent was near. It remained close to the ground and made no sounds.

At the same time and location, another Worm-eating Warbler was observed carrying in its bill small wisps of what appeared to be fine, dry grass, with which the bird flitted about and then made its way to the ground by descending a small branch. The warbler disappeared from view as it dropped to the ground. Approximately three minutes later, it emerged from precisely the place of its disappearance. A closer approach was not attempted for fear of disturbing the bird if, indeed, nest construction was taking place. Follow-up observations were not possible due to bulldozing of the area the next day by the Iowa Conservation Commission.

Although these observations would be sufficient for confirmation of nesting of Worm-eating Warbler by criteria established by the Breeding Bird Survey, these sightings would constitute evidence of "inferred nesting" according to the more stringent standards adopted by the authors of *Iowa Birds* (Dinsmore, et al.). The last accepted Iowa nesting of this species occurred prior to 1900.

On 22 June 1985 Jim Sandrock and I banded this same area. The young Cowbird, still being fed by the Worm-eating Warblers, was in the same place. At the location of the possible nest construction (see above), we observed at least 6 adult plumaged Worm-eating Warblers. These birds were in a small area, perhaps 25 yards square, and were seen at all levels, from near the ground to high in the overstory. At one time, at least 5 birds of this species were all on one limb of a large oak tree. More than one male was singing, and other birds produced the chip note. We counted an additional 5 or 6 Worm-eating Warblers at this same time, all in locations sufficiently distant to eliminate the possibility of duplication.

On this same day, at least 6 very active Kentucky Warblers (*Oporornis formosus*) were seen and heard in a small (5 yards square) opening in the dense deciduous forest. (This concentration of Kentucky Warblers was located only 25 yards from the group of Worm-eating Warblers described above.) Two adult Kentucky Warblers were seen feeding a juvenile of this species in the low branches of shrubs and saplings. Other adults were in the immediate vicinity. At least 15 Kentucky Warblers were seen and/or heard in a relatively small area — perhaps 200 yards square — in approximately one hour.

The high number of individuals of both warbler species (not in migration) active within a small area appears to be unique. Possibly these unusual concentrations of these shy, ground-nesting species were caused either by the recent and extensive bulldozing in the area on 21 and 22 June, or by the extremely heavy rains which occurred in this area during the night of 21-22 June. Each of these events — or a combination of the two — could have caused habitat alteration and/or nest destruction which resulted in the concentrations and conspicuousness of these birds.

A survey of *Iowa Bird Life* from 1931 to the present revealed no reports of such warbler concentrations. In fact, there have been few, if any, years that as many as 12 individual Worm-eating Warblers have been reported throughout the state. Nor does Bent (1953) comment on such "flocking" behavior.

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ROBERT CECIL, 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, IA 52632 and JAMES P. SANDROCK, 1634 Morningside Dr., Iowa City, IA. 52240.

Prairie Warbler in Lee County — On the morning of 4 July 1985, while in a large, open, brushy area of the Croton Unit of Shimek State Flores, I found an adult male Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*). I was first attracted to the bird by its repeated singing which consisted of thin, rising "zee" notes, usually 8 in number and approximately 1½ seconds in duration. Clearly visible were the bird's black eye and malar streaks against the yellow cheek, as well as the clear yellow breast with black streaking along the sides.

The bird could be most consistently located in a clump of trees containing Shingle Oak (*Quercus imbricaria*), Black Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), and Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) which overlooked an old pasture whose dominant species included thickets of Dogwood (*Cornus sp.*), Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*), and Poison Ivy. Conifer saplings planted by the Iowa Conservation Commission were also present. The area was surrounded by middle maturity, mixed deciduous woodland.

The bird was seen and heard on no fewer than 9 dates between 4 July and 16 July. Following this date, the bird's singing became much less consistent. On 2 August, the bird was seen to drive off a Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*) and then reestablish his territory with a single weak song issued from the top of a tree. On 8 August, however, the bird was found singing vigorously and repeatedly.

This is the second consecutive year for this species in the immediate area, with last year's sightings in another open area some .3 miles to the east. ROBERT I. CECIL, 327 S. 6th, Keokuk, IA 52632

Burrowing Owls Nest in Cherokee County — On June 5, 1985 I was contacted by a farmer who lives 1½ miles southwest of Aurelia in Cherokee County. He informed me that Burrowing Owls (*Speotyto cunicularia*) were nesting on his hot lot. That evening he took me to the burrow which had been located under a hog house about a half-mile south of his farmstead. By the time I reached the nest site, it had been destroyed. Rutting hogs inside the house had caused the dirt floor to collapse making the site inhabitable. However, the day after the destruction occurred, two adult owls and two young were observed by the farmer across the road at his other hog lot. One adult was seen feeding two young perched on a martin house.

When I arrived at the second hot lot, I saw what I believed was an adult male, its plumage being very faded. He was perched on top of the house about six feet off the ground. On the other side of the house were three other owls. They flew immediately but I was still able to photograph the perched adult.

On July 21st I returned to the same farm. The farmer had seen a second hatch of owls. I arrived at 10 a.m. and was taken to another hog house that had a wooden floor. The second burrow was located under the floor. It extended about three feet and then it narrowed and angled so that my view was obstructed. There were pellets and fur scattered near the entrance. The owl that I believed to be the adult male remained in the area. I hid and hoped that the young would appear but they did not. I then drove to a mowed oat field about a hundred yards away. The farmer said that there were four owls that could fly, two adults and two young. I flushed two owls, one flew over to the nest site and joined the male. The one that flew was much darker in appearance and I assumed that this was the female. I could not locate the other owl that flew. I decided to leave and come back in a couple of eve-

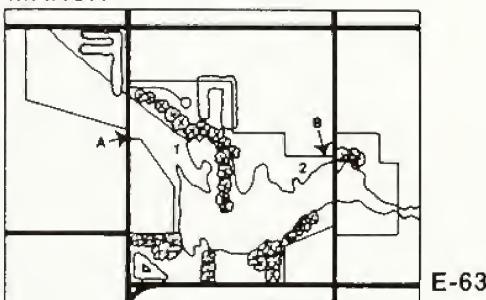
nings. As I was about to go, I took one last look and there appeared to be something at the entrance to the burrow. As I approached, I saw four young that appeared to be about three quarters grown. The adults were on top of the shed so I finally had six owls in view at one time. As I attempted to get pictures, the female gave a clucking sound and the young disappeared into the burrow.

I believe that two sets of young were raised at this site. Whether there were two sets of parents or one is now known. Dick Bieman, 901 Harris, Cherokee, Iowa

Status and Recent Sightings of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow in Iowa — Before 1982 the status of the Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*) was unclear. However, in that year, a concerted effort was made by Iowa birders to seek out this species in its appropriate habitats. Nine individuals were found at six different locations with many more being found in the ensuing years. I believe that the same situation exists today in regard to the Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*). Dinsmore et al. 1984 state that from 1960-1982, only 17 confirmed sightings have been reported. The authors believe that the Sharp-tailed Sparrow is really much more common than the records show, and that we have not been looking at the right time or habit (Dinsmore et al. 1984).

On 22 September 1984 I parked in the west park lot (map location) at Hendrickson Marsh in Story County. I proceeded southeast along the fencerow about one hundred yards and encountered several different kinds of sparrows. As I neared the marsh, the vegetation changed from grass to broadleaf plants and the depth from knee high to chest high. It was here that I first saw a Sharp-tailed Sparrow of the inland race (map location 1). When flushed, it would fly short distances of about 30-40 feet and then dive back into the undergrowth. Once it remained visible through the vegetation for over five minutes and I was able to study it closely.

HENDRICKSON MARSH



E-63

What initially attracted my attention was the creamy orange coloring above and below the eye and on the unmarked upper breast. After further study, I detected the gray triangle behind the eye and the unmarked gray nape of the neck. The lower breast was white with slight streaking under the wings. The cap of the head was dark and unmarked. The final field mark seen was two distinct white lines on a dark back. After viewing the bird, I returned home and called Joe Schaufenbuel and Mark Proescholdt. We met at the marsh but we were not able to relocate the bird.

On the morning of 3 October, Paul Martsching banded the north shoreline of the marsh from the east parking lot (map location B) to the first point. The shoreline vegetation here consisted of tall grass, knee high weeds and small willow thickets. It was in this area that he saw three Sharp-tailed Sparrows, two in view at the same time (map location 2). Later that morning he found another Sharp-tailed Sparrow in the same location as I had on 22 September. That evening Joe Schaufenbuel and Paul returned to the east side of the marsh and soon found one sparrow about 75 feet west of the parking lot.

On 10 October, Mark Proescholdt saw one or two Sharp-tailed Sparrows in the same general area as Joe and Paul. He related that he flushed the sparrow from

the grass and weeds, and that it flew further ashore into some willow thickets. He stated that "I was very fortunate to get some very good looks at the bird 15-20 feet away as it stayed out in the open for up to 1 minute before flying to another willow. . ." (Proescholdt 1984).

With *Iowa Birds* as a reference, our sightings (22 Sept. - 10 Oct.) appear to fall within the normal migration dates with 20 September listed as the third earliest and October 16 as third latest (Dinsmore et al. 1984). Interestingly, these sightings were life birds for all concerned. For Joe Schaufenbuel, it was his 304th Iowa bird and Paul Martsching's 250th Story County bird.

These sightings bring several questions to mind: 1. Is this an unusual year with more birds than normal? 2. Has the temporary lowering of the marsh's water level by one third created new, preferable habitat? 3. Have the birds been here year after year but we simply have not looked at the right time or place? On this point Schaufenbuel disagrees. He states "Are you so sure? . . . I have looked in marshy areas from Sept. 15 to Nov. for the Sharp-tailed for six years. I have seen many . . . (sparrows) . . . why then not a Sharp-tailed if they are so commonly overlooked?" (Schaufenbuel 1984). This raises a fourth question. Is the bird site specific, that is are there a number of birds in a few locations? Crawford reported that he had seen 30 Sharp-tailed Sparrows at Hendrickson Marsh in 1972 (Crawford 1975). This sighting could add credence to my last proposal.

I hope that this article will increase your awareness of the Sharp-tailed Sparrow in Iowa and that you will look for it at the appropriate time and place. Only with your input and sight records can we answer the currently, unsolved questions on the sparrow's statewide status. (Thanks are due to Jim Dinsmore and Joe Schaufenbuel for critically reviewing this article)

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HANK ZALETEL, 715 West St., Colo, IA. 50056

Returned on Banded Birds by Southwest Iowa Banders — Woodard Brown in the September, 1976, issue of *Iowa Bird Life* had a comment about the "Iowa Banding Summary" listing the Iowa banders and the number of birds banded by each. His suggestion was that something should be written about the returns on the banded birds and what had been learned about their migratory movements and longevity records.

Returns are published in the *Inland Bird Banding News*, a magazine for banders in eighteen states and two provinces in Canada. Long lists of returns would be boring to non-banders. But a few returns might be interesting to readers of *Iowa Bird Life*. I asked the southwest Iowa banders to send me a few of their interesting returns.

Betty Walters, a teacher at Shenandoah High School, lives on a farm ten miles north of Shenandoah. South of the farm there is a drainage ditch bordered by many trees, bushes and shrubs. Wild grapes intertwine among the branches of the large trees. At the bottom of the ditch, which in places becomes deep, there is a stream fed by springs so that in winter one can always find running water. Harris' Sparrows congregate in this ditch in winter for shelter and food, but when snow covers the ground, they come to the feeders around her house. Betty has had some interesting returns on Harris' Sparrows that she has banded.

If a bird is banded in January, it is considered to be at least one year old when banded. She has a six year return for a Harris, a seven year and an eight year

return. But the best return for a Harris' Sparrow that she sent me was the one banded on December 28, 1968. It returned in 1969, in 1974, and in 1976. Then on April 9, 1977, she got it in her trap again. If the bird was one year old when banded, this would be a ten year return for a Harris' Sparrow.

Betty has a seven year record for both a Hairy and a Downy Woodpecker. A Barn Swallow banded on June 13, 1965, returned again to nest in a barn on the farm on July 31, 1969, making a five year return for a Barn Swallow.

Southwest Iowa banders are cooperating with a project entitled, "Harris' Sparrow Migration Movements." This is a study by Sievert Rohwer with the Bird Populations Institute. He is trying to prove a theory that the dominant sparrows with the darkest throats and heads winter farther north, but if the snow covers the ground and the food becomes scarce, the dominant ones go south and force the immature to come back north where the food is scarce.

On January 1, 1978, an immature looking Harris' Sparrow hopped up to my patio platform late in the afternoon. He acted as though he was starved. At first he was very timid and seemed to be afraid of the other birds. He preferred to feed late in the afternoon after most of the birds had left. He was the only Harris' at the feeder until on Good Friday, March 24. It was snowing and another Harris' with a very dark throat and head hopped up to the platform. By this time the immature one had become braver and his throat was blacker. Now he held his own against the more dominant one as much as to say, "I was here first! I am at the top of the pecking order here! This is my patio, not yours." On the next Tuesday, I banded them both. This to me supports the theory that later in the spring, both kinds are found together and on their way to their nesting grounds.

Fitzhugh and Hazel Diggs live on a farm near Hamburg, Iowa. Surrounding their house on the north and west are cedar trees, redbuds, hackberry and ash trees, and stately oaks interspersed with open places and low bushes. They have an ideal place to band birds.

Hazel sent me some good returns on their banded Harris' Sparrows. They have many four year and six year returns on Harris' Sparrows. One return that was particularly interesting was a White-breasted Nuthatch banded August 11, 1968, and it returned April 7, 1978. If it were a bird that hatched the summer of 1968, it would be 10 years old, a very old record for a nuthatch.

Two of their Northern Orioles were banded in 1971. One came back in 1975 and the other in 1976, making a five and a six year return for orioles. A junco banded in December 1972 returned in February 1978, a six year return for a Northern Junco, a good longevity record for that species.

Ruth Phipps does much banding in her backyard in Shenandoah, Iowa, and also at the Manti Woods southwest of Shenandoah. Manti was once a pioneer village settled by a group of people who did not follow the Mormons to Utah. Today only an empty schoolhouse, a remnant of a restored cemetery, and a historical marker remain to tell the story of these pioneer people. The woods on the hillside has many beautiful oak and hickory trees with a creek meandering at the foot of the hills.

I recall the first time that Ruth ever saw a bird banded. She went with me to the woods at Manti on March 27, 1966. I was living at Shenandoah then and often banded at Manti. We checked the nets and in one net was a female Red-bellied Woodpecker. The bird was very unhappy and raised a fuss the minute I touched her. Of all things she had her long tongue caught in the net. I always carry a folding pair of scissors so I cut the net to release her tongue. But what an experience for Ruth who had never seen a bird banded before!

After I moved to Lamoni in 1970, Ruth received a master permit to band, and on November 23, 1971, five years later, she got the very same female Red-bellied Woodpecker in her net. Ruth said she was glad to know that the woodpecker was

still alive and there had been no damage to her tongue.

During the month of March, 1974, Ruth banded many American Goldfinches in her backyard and in April, 1977, she got returns on three of them, making a four year return for goldfinches. A Blue Jay banded on October, 1971, returned in 1974, and again in 1976, and on November 11, 1977, he was back again, at least a six year return.

A White-throated Sparrow that I banded in Lamoni on October 24, 1972, was found dead at Honey Grove, Texas, in January, 1973. So I learned from that record that one of my sparrows wintered in Texas, but I always supposed that the ones that I banded in Iowa would travel to northern Minnesota and Canada to nest. How surprised I was to have a card from the banding office saying a White-throated Sparrow banded at the Manti Woods near Shenandoah on October 23, 1968, had been found dead May, 1969, at Barrhead, Alberta, Canada! I was interested in knowing if the place the sparrow nested was in a forest area, plains, or tundra, as I noticed by a map that Barrhead was 80 miles northwest of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. When I wrote to the man who recovered the bird, I made a mistake by using that word "tundra," as the tundra is much farther north. His answer was that he had found the bird dead in his flower bed, that he lived in a mixed farming area that was neither forest nor tundra. He wrote, "You people in the states seem to think we live in a primitive wild west! There must be some lack of education in communication or something! We have modern homes with electricity, phone, and gas the same as you have." But at the end of the letter he did add that he would be glad to hear from me again if he could give me any more information.

I have banded many Cedar Waxwings but have never had one come back to my yard that I have previously banded; therefore, I was much interested in receiving a card from the banding office reporting a Cedar Waxwing that I had banded on March 4, 1968, had been found dead at Fort Worth, Texas, on April 4, 1969. Waxwings we know are gypsies and have no dependable time for migrating, so evidently one spent the winter in my yard and the next winter in Texas.

A Cedar Waxwing I banded on November 1, 1967, was found dead at Nelson, British Columbia, Canada, in June, 1970. The man who sent the band to the banding office was a professor at Selkirk College, Castlegar, British Columbia. He said that the Cedar Waxwings arrive toward the end of May and depart about the middle of September, that they did nest in the area and preferred the valleys close to the rivers where the large cottonwood trees are found.

On April 2, 1973, I banded a Northern Junco. I received a card from the banding office that this Junco had been found dead on March 8, 1974, by Mike Eddington at Mattoon, Illinois. Since the place for the information to send the band number is found on the inside of the tiny band Size 0, I was curious to know how Mike knew where to send the band so I wrote to him. His biology teacher, Mr. Sampson, answered by letter. He said that he had had a licensed bird bander come to his biology class and demonstrate the use of mist nets in banding birds. It was through this learning experience that Mike knew where to send the band when he found the dead junco.

On March 28, 1974, I netted a Northern Junco with a band that did not belong to me. This is called a foreign return. A note from the banding office informed me that it had been banded at Milton, Wisconsin, on March 22, 1972. Milton, Wisconsin, is south of Madison, Wisconsin; Mattoon, Illinois, is west of Terre Haute, Indiana. Whereas Lamoni, Iowa is south of Des Moines off Interstate 35 almost on the border line between Iowa and Missouri. I always supposed that the Northern Juncos that I band at Lamoni had come down from Canada through Minnesota. But these two records show east-west migration route.

I have had returns on American Robins found in Louisiana and also in Texas. I had a letter from an eleven-year-old boy from Chico, Texas, dated May 12, 1972. He

said he shot a robin with his new pellet gun because he saw a band on its leg. He did not realize that robins traveled so far and he said he would be careful not to shoot any more.

One of the most interesting letters I have received recently was from a fifteen-year-old boy from Oaks, Oklahoma. He said he was walking in the woods one day in January, 1977, and he found a bird that had been shot but was still alive. He drew a picture of the bird at the foot of a tree and a picture of himself standing by the tree. All around the tree it looked as though it was snowing. He said that he took the bird home and it lived three days before it died. He sent the band to the banding office and received a reply that I had banded the bird. He did not tell me the name of the bird and I had not heard from the banding office. When I did hear, I found out the bird was a Blue Jay that I had banded on August 16, 1976, in Lamoni. Yes, Blue Jays do migrate. I had a return from a banded Blue Jay that had been found at Tonganoxie, Kansas. I find it more interesting to get a return on a banded bird than to band a new one. MRS. W. L. DELONG, 1600 W. Oak Apr. 101, Independence, MO.

Book Review

The Complete Book of Birdhouse Construction for Woodworkers — Scott D. Campbell — Dover Publications, NY — 48 p., 63 b & w illus. — 1984 — paperback, \$1.85.

A fairly well done little book which covers its subject in short order. Basic designs are covered as well as the proper sizes for the various species that will utilize structures. I was surprised to see the Song Sparrow listed as a bird that will use a nest box. ed.

The Florida Scrub Jay — Glen E. Woolfenden and John W. Fitzpatrick — Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ — 406 p., 1 color & 10 B & w photos, many maps, charts & tables — 1984 — \$45.00, \$14.50 paperback.

The subtitle of this book is "Demography of a Cooperative-Breeding Bird." Based on over a decade of study this book establishes a demographic base for understanding the behavior called "helping at the nest." These jays occupy all acceptable habitat. About half the pairs are helped by one or more non-breeding helpers. The main source of this behavior in the eyes of the authors is habitat restraint. The book is a careful and detailed report of their findings and conclusions. ed.

Tropical Birds Coloring Book — Lucia de Leiris, 1985; **Audubon's Birds of America Coloring Book** — Paul E. Kenney, 1980; and **Fifty Favorite Birds Coloring Book** — Lisa Bonforte, 1983, each Dover Publication, Mineola, NY, 48 pp., wr. — \$2.50.

For the birder with small children there are now three Dover coloring books with the new one on tropical birds. Each book has a full page b & w drawing and full color, small sized print on the back of the covers for guidelines. The paper is of high quality and the birds are accurate in detail. The earlier books deal with U.S. species. ed.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

I am honored to have been elected as president at our recent meeting in Marshalltown. I believe strongly in the purposes of the IOU, and I look forward to the challenges ahead.

The purposes of the IOU as stated in our Articles of Incorporation and Constitution are "to encourage interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds and to unite all those who have this interest in common". During my term as president I hope to concentrate on the latter half of this purpose. We could all study and enjoy birds on our own, but for me the real joy of birding is in sharing activities with others. This is your organization and I will work to see that it serves your needs. The more people that become involved, the more enjoyment we will all

share.

In the March issue of IOWA BIRD LIFE you received a copy of a proposed new constitution for the IOU. I am pleased to report that this proposal was unanimously approved at Marshalltown without any changes. The new constitution will give us an improved structure and make it easier to get things done. This tremendous show of unanimity is evidence of a new spirit of cooperation in the IOU. If you have not recently been at one of our general meetings, I urge you to come to one in the near future. I think you will enjoy both the birds and the birders.

One of the major changes in the new structure is the formation of several standing committees. Our Records Committee has been functioning smoothly for several years and it now has constitutional status. New committees are Publications, Membership, and Library-Historical. The Publications Committee will be responsible for all aspects of IOWA BIRD LIFE, and also will be starting a newsletter during 1985. The Membership Committee will be responsible for recruiting new members as well as evaluating and improving relations with present members. The Library/Historical Committee will work to promote preservation of historical materials and artifacts relating to the IOU and to Iowa ornithology. If you have a special interest in helping with any of these committees, please contact me.

I would like to extend my appreciation to several past officers who have served the IOU for a number of years. Pat Layton had been our Librarian since 1971 and she has earned our appreciation. Serving as Editor since 1961, Pete Petersen deserves special recognition for his many years of stewardship of our journal. Pete will continue to be involved as a member of the Publications Committee.

Sincerely,

Carl J. Bendorf

1 June 1985

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Peter C. Petersen, Editor

I certify that the statements made by me are correct and complete.